

DEPARTMENT OF FINANCE BILL ANALYSIS

AMENDMENT DATE: June 29, 2011
POSITION: Oppose

BILL NUMBER: AB 650
AUTHOR: B. Blumenfield

BILL SUMMARY: Blue Ribbon Task Force on Public Transportation

This bill would establish, until March 30, 2013, a 12-member Blue Ribbon Task Force on Public Transportation for the 21st Century (Task Force) to issue a report to the Governor and Legislature by September 30, 2012. The report would provide findings and recommendations that address the current state of California's transit system, the level and types of transit needed to meet specified goals, the estimated cost of creating the needed transit system, and potential sources of funding and methods for attaining that funding to sustain the system's needs.

FISCAL SUMMARY

This bill appropriates \$750,000 from the Public Transportation Account (PTA) to the Department of Transportation (Caltrans) for the purpose of funding the Task Force, providing administrative staffing, and contracting with consultants, such as the Institute of Transportation Studies at the University of California, to provide expert advice, analysis, and written reports.

SUMMARY OF CHANGES

Amendments to this bill since our analysis of the March 31, 2011 version do not alter our position. This bill, as amended June 29, 2011, would make the following changes:

- Require the Speaker of the Assembly and the Senate Committee on Rules to each appoint six specified members of the Task Force, rather than jointly appointing all twelve members, and require the Task Force to elect a chair from among the ten non-legislative members.
- Change the deadline to appoint Task Force members from March 31, 2012, to January 31, 2012.
- Remove the requirement that the Task Force's report include best practices based on a review of transit systems worldwide and suggested scenarios for phasing in transit development, and change the deadline to issue the report to the Governor and Legislature from March 31, 2013, to September 30, 2012.
- Change the sunset date from March 31, 2017, to March 30, 2013.

COMMENTS

The Department of Finance is opposed to this bill because it could increase pressure to provide additional funding for transit activities from an already limited pool of transportation resources. Additionally, by appropriating \$750,000 from the PTA, the bill redirects resources that could be made available for intercity rail, local transit operations, and other transit capacity-increasing projects.

Finance also opposes this bill because the bill's goals for transit are so vague as to be meaningless for any objective determination of need. The "need" determined by the Task Force is likely to be subjectively based on personal opinions of the members and will thus be unlikely to garner public support or support by the Legislature and the Governor.

Analyst/Principal (0751) M. Tollefson	Date	Program Budget Manager Mark Hill	Date
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Department Deputy Director	Date
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Governor's Office:	By:	Date:	Position Approved _____
			Position Disapproved _____

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Finance also notes that Caltrans is already required to produce reports similar to that required in this bill through the Statewide Transit Strategic Plan and other statewide efforts required by Chapter 728, Statutes of 2008 (SB 375) and Chapter 488, Statutes of 2006 (AB 32). However, the author's office indicates that the Task Force would be required to draw upon this existing research and address the issue of how to fund public transit in the future, an aspect not required by existing reports.

ANALYSIS

A. Programmatic Analysis

Current law establishes various transit districts and other local entities for development of public transit on a regional basis and makes various state revenues available to those entities for those purposes.

Current law establishes the Department of Transportation (Caltrans) as the multimodal transportation department within the state and requires it to develop the California Transportation Plan (CTP), a statewide long-range transportation plan with goals, policies, and strategies for meeting the state's future mobility needs. The CTP is required under both federal and state law and must be updated by December 31, 2015, and every 5 years thereafter, which dovetails with the statutorily required regional transportation plan process. The current CTP was approved in 2006, and updated in 2007. Chapter 585, Statutes of 2009 (SB 391) expanded the scope of the CTP to incorporate greenhouse gas emission reduction strategies and to identify the statewide integrated multimodal transportation system needed to achieve those reductions. An interim report, which provides an overview of sustainable communities strategies and an assessment of how those strategies will influence the statewide integrated multimodal system, is required to be completed by Caltrans by December 31, 2012.

This bill would establish, until March 30, 2013, a 12-member Blue Ribbon Task Force on Public Transportation for the 21st Century (Task Force) to issue a report to the Governor and Legislature by September 30, 2012. The report would provide findings and recommendations that address the current state of California's transit system, the level and types of transit needed to meet specified goals, the estimated cost of creating the needed transit system, and potential sources of funding and methods for attaining that funding to sustain the system's needs.

The Task Force would be comprised of twelve members, with six appointed by the Senate Committee on Rules and six appointed by the Speaker of the Assembly no later than January 31, 2012. The Senate Committee on Rules would be required to appoint a representative from business, public transit, the environment, regional transportation, a transit advocacy group, and a member of the Senate. The Speaker of the Assembly would be required to appoint a representative from organized labor, public health or air quality, private transit, education, finance, and a member of the Assembly. The Task Force is required to elect a chair from among the ten non-legislative members. The Task Force would be required to meet at least twice a month and conduct nine public listening sessions in specified location throughout the state. The Task Force members would not receive a salary, but would receive necessary travel expenses, including transportation, lodging, and meals.

This bill requires that within 45 days of the last member's appointment, the Task Force establish a clear scope of work and timeline for accomplishing this bill's purpose. For the purposes of gathering information for the written report, the Task Force is required to consult with Caltrans, the California Transportation Commission, the Department of Housing and Community Development, the Business, Transportation, and Housing Agency, and the State Air Resources Board, among other state agencies. While Finance has not heard back from all agencies required to consult with the Task Force, those costs are anticipated to be minor and absorbable.

